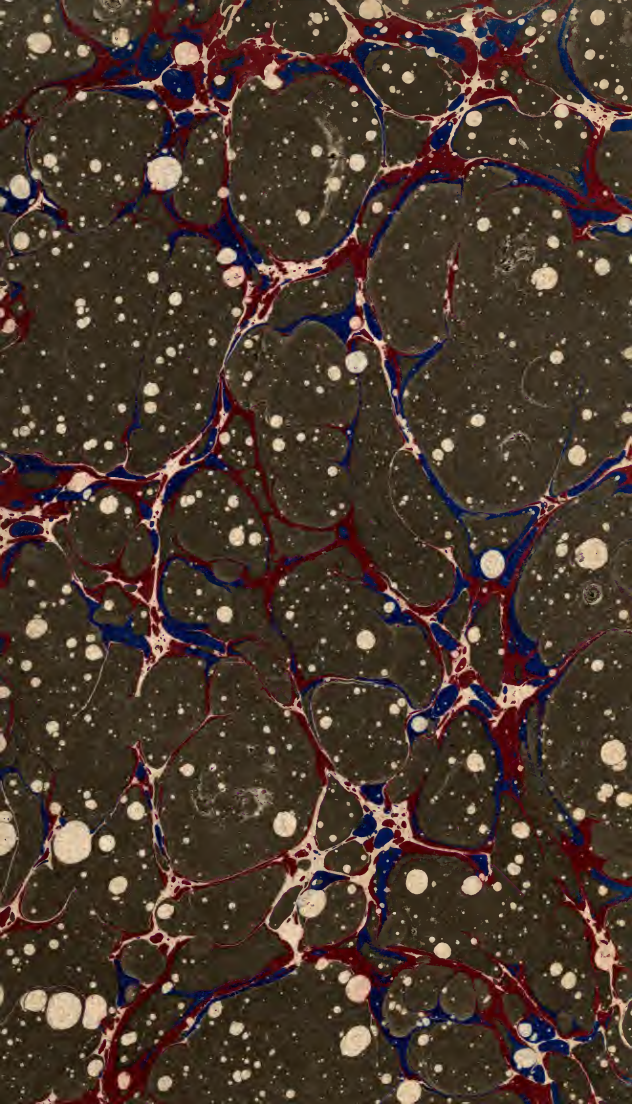

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A Crown of Thorns

FLORA HAINES LOUGHEAD

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"The Gold Dust Series"

A Monthly Publication
of Short Stories . . .
by
FLORA HAINES LOUGHEAD

No. 1—The Man from Nowhere.

No. 2—A Crown of Thorns. Adam and Eve.

January, 1892

Press Notices of No. 1

From the many kind references to the first issue of the series, the following are selections.

We can commend it to any one who likes good fiction, and if the other stories in this series are equal to it, this venture ought to prove a success. Mrs. Loughead deserves success, for she is always conscientious in her work and she is among the very few writers of fiction on this coast who keep clear of sensationalism, content to paint life as it is.—*San Francisco Chronicle.*

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—*Newark Evening News.*

A Crown of Thorns

Flora Haines Loughead

C. A. Murdock & Co.
San Francisco

A CROWN OF THORNS.

LEE HOP TONG, most aristocratic Chinese physician in San Francisco, sallied forth one morning clad in holiday attire. A close-fitting cap, with a black velvet border and a large coral button in the center of the crown, surmounted his neatly shaven pate, and his long queue was intertwined with the finest and glossiest of black silk strands. His arms were invisible, doubled up like the wings of a chicken within the capacious sleeves of his purple brocade blouse. His nether limbs were resplendent in voluminous trousers of sky-blue silk, neatly confined at a sufficient distance from his ankles to display a spotless extent of well-starched muslin hose above the embossed velvet shoes, with thick felt soles, in which his shapely feet were encased.

The air of unwonted festivity which characterized his costume found no corresponding expression of hilarity upon the doctor's face. His head was bent forward until his chin rested upon the shining brass buttons of his frock; sombre shadows brooded over the merry lines of his smooth, fat countenance, and he walked slowly and wearily, like one bowed beneath a heavy burden. From time to time he cast a troubled look toward his companion, quickly withdrawing his eyes as he encountered the wistful gaze of a small being perched in the latter's arms. This animated bundle of humanity possessed a pair of remarkably bright eyes, and his rosy complexion and Hibernian features proclaimed his Caucasian descent.

The doctor's companion was Officer Canfield, a special policeman, whose beat embraced the rookeries of Waverly Place, and the child he carried in

his arms was a white infant, purchased from a Folsom-street foundling hospital for a stated amount of cash in hand paid, and which had been for a year past the light of Lee Hop Tong's abode. The trio were on their way to the rooms of the Society for the Protection of Children, whither the pagan had been summoned to answer for his part in an infamous traffic.

For the hundredth time since its organization the managers of the Children's Society were skirmishing along the border-land of an atrocious evil, lacking the hardihood or the resolution to strike boldly at its core. The private foundling hospitals of San Francisco annually cloak a sum of infamy and crime, beside which the atrocities of the French baby-farms pale into insignificance. Subject to no State or local law, they are securely hedged in from public inspection. The physicians and matrons in charge are thus enabled to

make false returns to the authorities. Their every movement is enveloped in mystery and secrecy. It is needless to add that these institutions are paying speculations, receiving large sums of hush money from the unhappy women who are their patrons, and driving shrewd bargains in the disposition of comely and healthy infants, while the sickly and unattractive pass silently out of existence. Prominent among these establishments were formerly two of pretentious appearance, situated in fashionable neighborhoods, into whose keeping young girls belonging to reputable families were frequently confided, to preserve intact the outward sanctity of maidenhood by the sacrifice of the best and noblest instincts of womanhood.

The location of the headquarters of the Children's Society was in itself a revelation and a confession. Occupying the upper floor of an old-fashioned

brick building on Merchant street, on the one hand it acknowledged its kinship with crime and shame by abutting on the ugly excresence of crumbling brick known as the City Prison, and on the other leaned on the stout arm of the law, symbolized by the chambers of several leading attorneys. Its rooms were shared by the Animal's Society. A wretched gray horse, feeble and emaciated, with great sores on his back, stood in the street below, his ears pricked up with an air of mild triumph, as he watched his driver marching off in the direction of the jail.

The doctor and his escort ascended the stone steps and passed through the low iron gates which guarded the outer entrance to the building.

A singular spectacle was presented in the rooms dedicated to the Society's use. Disposed throughout the apartments were no less than thirteen white baby girls, ranging from four months

to two years of age, arrayed alike in Oriental costume. The greater number of these wore soiled and ragged garments, and their attendants consisted chiefly of Chinese women, whose painted faces, gaudy silken attire, and expression of passive ignorance united to assert their vicious calling.

The doctor's entrance was followed by the advent of a Chinese priest of saturnine and forbidding aspect, clad in his robes of ceremony, consisting of a long, full gown of some rich stuff, whose vivid crimson struck a sharp chromatic discord with the broad ribands of brilliant magenta that depended from his gorgeous head-gear. He held by the hand a little girl some two years of age.

These two latest accessions to the little waifs were clothed with a care and nicety that proclaimed their adoption by a superior class. Dr. Lee Hop Tong's charge wore loose pantaloons of

pea-green silk, a scarlet blouse and copper-toed morocco shoes, while his small head was adorned with a marvelous cap, composed of overlapping folds of variegated ribbons interwoven with bright tinsel threads. The little girl who walked by the grim priest's side was clad in a loose blouse of bright yellow cloth, with trousers of violet silk, pink stockings, and tiny embroidered shoes. Her head was covered with a quaint hood of red merino, embellished with two mimic horns above either temple, each finished with a silken tassel. Grotesquely habited though she was, her face was one of pathetic beauty. Her skin was fair and of a pearly transparency, its delicate coloring putting to shame the artificial carmine on her lips, and a single tendril of curling hair, that had escaped from its close confinement, strayed across her forehead like a sunbeam at play.

Glowering in the background stood Mother Perfidy, invoked from her Folsom-street lair by the menace to her profitable commerce of purchasing human souls and vending human bodies. The brawny matron of a Sixth-street asylum appeared at her side, and over them towered the venerable white hairs of one who, posing as a philanthropist, for years pursued his nefarious traffic under the direct sanction of the State, until enlightened public opinion and legislative enactment deprived him of his annual appropriation.

The humane association was represented by the President and Secretary and a few of the most active members, supplemented by a corps of benevolent ladies, who stood ready to provide the small waifs with homes in certain charitable institutions under their charge. At the last moment their number was swelled by two new arrivals. An elderly lady entered, with the smiling as-

surance of one inured to the trials of publicity, patiently borne for dear charity's sake, while the constrained manner of her young companion seemed to announce a novice in the field.

A broad-shouldered young fellow, who had been engaged in earnest consultation with the officers of the society, moved eagerly forward to welcome the new-comers. He had a finely molded face, with a square jaw, a pair of fearless blue eyes, and a mobile mouth. A practiced student of physiognomy would have declared that David Chase could be bold as a lion in defense of a righteous principle, or in the championship of another's cause, and the most arrant coward in pleading his own claims. He greeted the elder lady with a cordial clasp of the hand, contenting himself with a low bow to the younger woman, and a stammering salutation.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to

see you here, Miss Ainsworth. If other young ladies of your class would interest themselves in our efforts, the sum of misery and wrong in our community would be materially lessened."

"I protest, Mr. Chase. You must not give me credit that I do not deserve. I met Mrs. Baxter at the School of Design, and she took me captive. It promised a new sensation."

She spoke so wearily, and with such a fine scorn of any philanthropic pretensions on her own part that he was abashed, and would gladly have recalled his effusive speech.

Another gentleman had witnessed this interview, and stepped forward with assurance as David Chase fell back. This was Edwin Vanderlep, a man of years and dignity, one of the most brilliant lights of the bar, and who led in every great social and moral reform. His exalted views, the purity and severity of his own manner

of life, the distant courtesy he observed toward his most intimate associates, raised him so far above the level of his fellows that he was esteemed rather than liked by them.

Mrs. Baxter fluttered and smiled as she answered an icy inquiry after the condition of her favorite charity. It was always a distinction to receive special notice from Mr. Vanderlep. He addressed the younger lady with a shade less of frostiness in his tone.

"Miss Ainsworth, I hope I see you well. I do not wish to discourage Mrs. Baxter's proselyting spirit, but are you sure that it is wisdom for you to remain throughout the proceedings here to-day? There will be much that will be offensive in suggestion to a pure mind."

The note of authority in his voice could not surprise any one who heard it, for it was generally known that he was Mr. Ainsworth's legal adviser, and

had been a frequent visitor to the house from the time of Olive's childhood. It may have been the courage bred of long association that enabled the young girl to oppose her own will to his.

"I think I shall stay, Mr. Vanderlep," she replied quietly.

The gentleman excused himself with a bow and crossed to the other side of the room, where he busied himself with some papers lying on a desk. It was not Mr. Vanderlep's way to press advice upon client or friend. Mrs. Baxter was embarrassed at her own implied indiscretion.

"I am afraid I have made a mistake, Olive. I really did not think. If you would prefer not to stay"——

"But I shall stay," interrupted the girl with decision. "It interests me. I shall watch the play through."

There was a long delay before the society could begin formal proceedings. In the interval many persons dropped

in and out, for a rumor had gone abroad concerning the curious assemblage. These visitors were generally men and women of standing in the community, the greater number being annual members of the society, and therefore interested in its doings. It was an agreeable surprise to many of these visitors to find Olive Ainsworth there, and a stream of light badinage and gay discussion of social events flowed around her. Under this influence she was a different person. The look of wearied discontent vanished in the light of her gay good humor. Graceful, quick of speech, animated and pleasant to look upon, even the sullen faces of the Orientals turned to her as if by common consent, or as all animated creation instinctively seeks the sunshine. The little children, growing restless under long inaction, caught sight of the charming face and sparkling eyes, and were fascinated into

silence, as by some new and beautiful picture.

"They will try to make out that some of the babies are actually of Mongolian descent. An absurd claim. Their features speak their race," said a voice, in the midst of a discussion of a german that was to come off the following night.

"That reminds me that I am really forgetting my duty," exclaimed Mrs. Baxter, with quick self-accusation. "I promised our board of lady managers that I would carefully inspect the infants before promising to admit any to our Refuge. We have to be very cautious in the matter of contagious diseases; it would be dreadful to admit a leper. And we are also very particular to accept no children with vicious or depraved tendencies. I always rely on physiognomy to tell me a child's character, and have never been mistaken. Would you like to go around with me, Olive?"

"As you please," was the indolent reply.

Miss Ainsworth followed her friend as she made the tour of the rooms, stopping to pat the small outcasts on the head or to address an occasional patronizing word. The younger lady smiled at the uncanny aspect and solemn faces of the wee creatures, and condescended to drop some bonbons into their laps, finding amusement in the quick forfeiture of their childish dignity. As they passed the sallow priest, the child seated on the chair beside him lifted her pleading eyes to the ladies' faces.

"What a charming little face!" cried Mrs. Baxter. "And what a comical little hood. How very effective it would be in Christmas tableaux. You funny little tot!" she said, addressing the child, and lifting one of the tiny hands in her own, "how would you like to come and live in a great big house,

with a big yard and trees and flowers, and lots of other babies? Oh, we must have her for our Refuge. She is so nice and dainty-looking: so different from the rest. And then her romantic history—it would be sure to interest somebody who would want to adopt her, and that would probably mean a handsome addition to our endowment. We are so short of funds."

These last remarks were addressed by Mrs. Baxter to Miss Ainsworth. An impartial and attentive listener might have wondered wherein the plan of the Orphan's Refuge differed from that of the less aristocratic institutions, whose workings were to be laid bare that day.

Olive Ainsworth did not reply. She was looking, with strange intentness, into the blue eyes fixed upon her own. Moved by a sudden impulse, she stooped and lifted the little girl's gay hood, disclosing a singular mark on her fore-

head, where blue veins interlaced and formed a triangle on the white skin.

"Queer little beggars, are they not?"

Chase would not challenge Miss Ainsworth's ridicule by laying bare the indignation and compassion that stirred his honest heart, while contemplating the degraded purpose for which these innocents of his own race had been designed. He was unprepared for the cold rebuke he received:

"Can you call them by no better name?"

"Do you wish me to speak out all that is in my mind? Shall I denounce the inhuman wretches who abandon their tender offspring to such a fate?—the civilization that tolerates such a crying outrage?"

The girl faltered and moved back, as if she had received a blow. For the third time that morning David Chase took himself to task for his inconsiderate speeches. A man should have

better sense, he told himself, fiercely, than to force such offensive suggestions upon a girl as delicately reared, as innocent of evil as this Olive Ainsworth. He watched her as she quietly withdrew to the side of the room, taking up her stand beside one of the old-fashioned French windows, reaching out her hand to hold the sash slightly ajar, that a current of air might circulate through the close apartment.

She was very beautiful, he wistfully reflected, noting the clear-cut features, the graceful poise of her head, the dreamy eyes, the gently modeled figure, clad in a neatly fitting suit of dark brown cloth. Fair, accomplished, occupying a recognized place in society, why should the mad desire possess his soul to make this peerless woman his wife? He, a poor attorney, dependent upon his slender practice, cherishing a stock of lofty ambitions, and at the mercy of a host of philanthropic notions that

kept him in a state of chronic impecuniosity; possessing no gifts beyond a faculty for work and a dogged perseverance that kept him afloat in the face of every obstacle.

He reasoned with himself that even if his prospects justified the thought of such a union, there could be no congeniality between them. No life bred altogether on the sunny side of existence could appreciate the grave demands, the sober issues of his own. Only the touchstone of pain could bring this irresponsible girlhood into sympathy with his own mental and spiritual being, and he was unselfish enough to pray that it might never be applied.

There was work to be done, and he addressed himself resolutely to the business before him. The peculiar emergency in which the society was called upon to act was wholly without a precedent, and it was necessary to proceed with caution, consulting the

highest legal authorities. The letters of adoption produced by the Chinese were conclusive upon their face, and it was deemed desirable to avoid long and tedious circumlocution.

The status of eleven of the children was readily established. A wise law of the State, frequently invoked for the protection of the innocent, proved applicable to the case, and the debased creatures who claimed their custody were marshaled away to be booked for the "tanks" in the city prison, on the charge of harboring minors in their abodes of shame. As the fallen women filed out of the room they stole shy glances at their Caucasian sisters. Unconscious vice gazed in mute bewilderment at conscious virtue. Mrs. Baxter drew aside her skirt, to preserve it from contamination, as they passed.

The two cases that awaited adjudication were of a more complex nature. No legal statute debarred a respectable

foreigner from acquiring a title to a child of another race; and, in the absence of any natural guardian, it was difficult to see how the Society could assert its right to interfere.

"Such practices are undoubtedly opposed to the policy of our civilization," asserted the President, "but one dare not override the law of the land in deference to a sectional prejudice. If we transgress our authority, the matter will be dragged into the higher courts. If the courts sustain us, we shall bring down upon us the maledictions of the whole country east of the Rocky Mountains."

"Suppose we question the fellows themselves. We may trap them into some sort of damaging admission," naively suggested Chase.

The proposal was promptly put into force, and an informal court of inquiry convened. Lee Hop Tong was first to take the witness stand, having previ-

ously received a solemn admonition that his cause would be best served by accurate and truthful representations.

Olive Ainsworth remained at the window, looking out upon the narrow, grimy street. A light rain was falling, the first of the season, and the dusty fronts of the tall, stuccoed buildings opposite were frescoed in novel designs by the water that trickled from their eaves. Muddy brooklets swept woefully adown the worn basalt blocks, and formed miniature lakes in the depressions of the pavement. The sky lowered overhead with the promise of an impending deluge. The prison-van rattled noisily over the stones, and a coffin wagon sped up the street in the direction of the receiving hospital.

"Where you get him?" demanded the President of Dr. Lee Hop Tong, considerately adapting his language to the comprehension of the Mongolian, and designating, as he spoke, the rosy-

cheeked boy who leaned confidingly against the physician's knee.

With a disdainful wave of the hand the Chinaman spurned the proffered service of an interpreter, and undertook the conduct of his own case.

"Gettee him flom one looman, Missee Puffidy, him stan' oba da," nodding in the direction of Mother Perfidy, who scowled back a recognition. "Him Missee Puffidy gettee velly sick—hab lame leg. He send fo' me. I go. Gib him med'cin, makee him leg well."

Lee Hop Tong's speech was characterized by the confusion of genders habitual among his countrymen, and wound up with an adroit flourish of his professional skill.

"And Mother Perfidy sold you the baby?"

"Me tellee you. Missee Puffidy him say me, 'You gettee mally?' Me say, 'Yes, me gettee mally.' He say, 'You gettee chile?' I say, 'No gettee no

chile.' He say, 'You wantee him littee baby?' I velly glad takee baby."

"And how much money did you pay Mother Perfidy for the baby, Dr. Tong?" insisted the Secretary. But the wily pagan was not to be betrayed into any compromising admissions.

"No buy him. Takee him allee same my boy. You tink I sell him tlee, fo' tousan' dolla! Not much! Missee Puffidy say he mudda velly sick, velly poo'; no takee ca' him baby. Him wantee nicee home littee fellow. Makee you plesant of he, Lee Hop. You sabe plesant, allee same Clismas, New Yea'? Makee me plesant him baby. I makee him plesant money. No buy, no sell. You sabe?"

A smile ran over the faces of the attorneys present at the skillful evasion of the letter of the law. It was plain that the Chinaman had been coached by able counsel. They examined the papers of adoption, duly witnessed, and

bearing a notary's seal, observing that the name of the adopted father was written in a different ink from the body of the document, and apparently at a later date, confirming their suspicions that Mother Perfidy kept a stock of the documents on hand.

"You likee boys, Lee Hop Tong?" asked the President, temporizing, addressing the Mongolian in a jocular tone. "Home in China, no likee girls. Too many girls, drown 'em?"

"Oh, no, no! Nebba dlown 'em. Dlown 'em velly bad."

The doctor's face was owlish in its expression of horror and disapproval. His eloquent disavowal aroused the interest of thoughtful listeners. Was it possible that they had stumbled across a Chinaman possessed of such exalted views that he dared openly to express his condemnation of one of the most ancient and honored customs of the Flowery Kingdom?

"Oh, come now, doctor," persisted Chase, "what do you do with your surplus feminine population; what you do, when too many girls?"

"No dlown. Dlown 'em velly bad," gravely reiterated the doctor. "Put hand oba mout'. Smudda 'em."

The sensation created by this explanation had not wholly subsided when further deliberations were interrupted in an unexpected manner. There was a sound as of a cyclone tearing through the corridor outside, a fierce parley at the door, and a ruddy-faced Irish woman burst into the room in a state of wild excitement. Disregarding the astonished glances cast upon her, unmindful of the formal proceedings whose even tenor she had disturbed, she hastily scanned the grotesque little figures in their uncouth attire, then seized the red-cheeked boy with noisy demonstrations of affection and wrath.

"Och, me darlint, an' did mother forsayke ye in her thrubble an' want, wid the siven mouths to fade, and fadder slaypin' out at Lone Mountain? Blissid traysure! Niver agin shall ye layve me, if it's pack ye on me back I'll be oblayged to do whin I work over the tub. Wirrah! wirrah! All bedaykced with haythen trappins, an' yer illegant suit of hair clane shaven as a widdy's note. Alack's the day that I'm livin' to see a choild of moine sportin' of a pigtail!"

She turned upon poor Lee Hop Tong in a blaze of anger, magnificent to witness.

"And so ye're the rich banker ould Missus Perfidy tould me was a-dyin' to adopt me choild! An' ye dared to take this swayte chayrub to yer pest-house an' fade him on rats, ye yellow-faced, sleek-skinned Chinayse r-r-rascal!"

In her fury, Mistress Murphy shook her fist in the Mongolian's face.

The doctor received her torrent of abuse and flood of invective without resentment. The sombre shadows on his face deepened. He entered but one mild protest.

"No feed him rat. Rat no good fo' baby stummick. Pay black looman—you call him negloo—nuss baby, one, too, tlee, fi' mont. Baby glow big, stlong, tellee looman no wantee any mo'. Gettee milkman bling nice flesh jessey milk allee day. You sabe?"

From an inner pocket of his capacious blouse the doctor produced a bundle of papers and solemnly drew forth a half dozen receipted milk-bills, which he laid before the infuriated mother with all the dignity and courtesy of an embassador who presents his credentials at a foreign court.

Mrs. Murphy's wrath visibly abated. Certain early disadvantages of education detracted from the satisfaction she might otherwise have felt in reviewing

this evidence of the careful provision which had been made for the welfare of her son; but she had already received more tangible testimony. Her motherly hands had made a series of systematic explorations beneath the child's loose garments, and numerous vigorous punches of his limbs and joints, beneath which the young Murphy winced, proved the lad to be sound in flesh and firm of muscle. She could not repress a broad smile of pride as she inserted her finger in his mouth and was rewarded by a vicious nip from a double row of sharp ivories.

"I've nothin' agaynst ye, sor; but I'll relayve ye from any farther consarn on me son's account. Not but ye've done very well—for a haythen!" she added, with crushing condescension. She re-arranged the gay cap on the child's head, assuring the doctor that she would "rayturn the garments on the morrow."

"Good-day to ye, sor. Be kind enough to make out yer bill, and I'll endeavor to pay ye for the thrubble an' ixpinse ye've been to."

Lee Hop Tong could maintain his composure no longer. His look of immobility fell from him like a mask. His voice, hitherto the monotonous sing-song of his race, developed newfound capacity for emotional expression.

"You payee me keep him warm. You payee me feed him. What you payee me for lub him? I get mally velly long—sebenteen yea'. Hab no baby. Bimeby me get old; my wife get old. Nobody take ca' me; nobody take ca' my wife. W'ite looman no wantee baby. I tink get one w'ite chile, be good to him, bling up all same my chile. Bimeby he glow up, makee sma't man, takee ca' me, my wife. I likee him allee same my fadda, modda. He cut teef, gettee fleba, sick many

night. Me up some time allee night; takee in my ahm, makee him go 'by-by-sleep'"—swinging his arms to and fro with a rhythmic motion. "Now baby allee gone. I velly solly, my wife velly solly. I tink baby gone killee my wife. Cly allee day, no sleep night. We go to bed, go sleep, wake up—oh, whe' baby!"

The tragic start with which he concluded would have done credit to the histrionic stage. However well Lee Hop Tong had been coached to protect his legal rights, there was nothing counterfeit in his emotion. The tender, fickle, Irish heart melted beneath the spell of his broken eloquence. Tears and smiles chased each other in rapid succession over the mother's face, and when the lusty boy reached out his arms to his adopted sire, fastening his fingers in the folds of the doctor's blouse, Mrs. Murphy offered no resistance.

"We will pass on to the next case," said the president, kindly. "I foresee that Mrs. Murphy, together with Lee Hop Tong and his good wife, will adjust this matter among themselves."

What ailed Olive Ainsworth that she should rove so restlessly about the room, staring at the choice engravings on the wall with blurred vision that saw only a baby's wistful face and a pair of forlorn blue eyes, her heart throbbing wildly as she listened to the rival claimants of a little child's affection? As the contest reached an amicable settlement she resumed her former post at the window, apparently an interested spectator of the crowd that surged along Montgomery street below. No one who looked upon her calm face divined the wild strife raging within, the bitter cup of memory that the girl was forcing upon herself, the brave resolve that was growing in her heart.

Unwilling to compromise his dignity

by essaying pigeon English, the astute priest leaned upon the services of an interpreter.

"From whom did you procure this child?" asked the representative of the Society.

The priest pointed a long, slender finger, terminating in a claw-like nail, directly at a physician of repute who stood among the spectators, and who conducted a species of foundlings' home in whose interests he was supposed to be present, when the children should be re-assigned to charitable abodes.

The physician bridled, and answered, with a show of honest indignation:

"It is false. In all the years that I have pursued my philanthropic work in this community, I have never permitted a child to go into any but upright Christian families of the highest standing."

"It seems to me that the testimony of a gentleman like Dr. Rehbruner

ought to be conclusive against a pagan priest who scorns our religion and will naturally disregard the oath he is compelled to take," said Mr. Vanderlep, in his cold, incisive voice.

"Mr. President, in spite of Mr. Vanderlep's distinguished advice, I hope very much that the inquiry will be pressed," said David Chase, with an apologetic look at the gentleman to whom he referred. "Although this man may have no respect for our oath, any reader of physiognomy must believe that he will have regard for the truth. His testimony may enable us to check this outrageous commerce in a quarter where it has not been believed to exist." And he looked boldly across the room at the doctor, who glowered at him in return.

"I think we may as well push the inquiry," said the President. "It is equally fair to those under suspicion and to society. An innocent man

should court complete exoneration, nothing less."

The solemn-visaged priest began a long recitation, speaking low and forcibly, and with a melancholy cadence. Several times in the course of his speech he was interrupted by the interpreter, who appeared to put independent questions to him. When the priest ceased speaking, the former looked serious.

"He tells an incredible story," said the interpreter, a Bohemian journalist, who had picked up a smattering of several Oriental tongues during a vagabond pilgrimage abroad. "Yet he seems willing to stake his life on the truth of his statement, for I cautioned him that it was a hanging offense to tell a lie in this court. He says that a year and a half ago he lost a child, a little girl. He was very much prostrated with disappointment, he calls it. The undertaker who provided the coffin and hearse for the child, probably

struck by his liberality and feeling, and not thinking that anything he said would be taken up by a Chinaman, flattered him by telling him that he was a better fellow than some white men; that out on Mission street there was a place where white babies were kept, and they died off so fast they were buried three and four in a coffin. The priest seems to have been very much upset by the loss of the child, being deprived of the one he had expected to nurse and wait on him when he got old—the prevailing idea among Chinese parents. He contracted with the undertaker to get him a girl-baby from the place he described, and this is the child. He seems to be firmly persuaded that the place from which the little creature came was the establishment kept by our friend across the way, and here is the paper with which he substantiates his statement."

He handed over a form of adoption, similar to those that had been previ-

ously presented, with the single exception that an effort had been made to so anglicize the spelling of the priest's name that it would not be readily suspected of being of foreign nationality.

"Is this your signature, Dr. Rehbruner?" asked the President, handing over the paper.

"It is all a scheme—a trick to ruin my professional standing," exclaimed the doctor, while his face flushed. "I remember the circumstances very well. Dutton, the undertaker, assured me that the man was an Eastern gentleman of wealth and high standing"—he checked himself, conscious that he was admitting too much.

"And you did not think it worth your while to make any personal investigation, even though the life and destiny of an innocent child depended upon the truth of the statement? Dr. Rehbruner, this will be made the subject of investigation by the proper

authorities at another time," sternly replied the President.

The physician dropped quietly out of the room. He could not endure the gaze of two burning eyes in a girl's pale face.

As he left the room, Miss Ainsworth turned her head and fixed her eyes with a look of strange intensity upon the solitary little creature over whom the grim fanatic kept ward.

The officers of the Society again advised together.

"It is useless to ask him what he intends to do with her," said one, "for there is little doubt but that he means to rear her respectably, according to his lights. And if he didn't, he knows too much to admit it."

"Yet you can see he has no more regard for her than if she were a dog or a beast of burden," said another.

"She is afraid of him. Have you noticed how she looks at him whenever he moves or speaks?"

"If we could only get the little one's testimony," said the reporter, "I've no doubt but that she could make out a case for herself." For by this time he was interested in the baby's fate, in spite of himself and in defiance of all the rules of his profession.

"Poor child!" said Chase.

Up to this time the child had awaited her turn with a patient gravity beyond her years, but as she perceived that she had become the subject of general attention, she searched the faces around her, and dwelt at last upon Chase's sterling countenance. Looking at him steadily, she pointed to her feet, while the muscles at the corners of her eyes contracted as if from pain.

"Kea'k tung!" *

They all looked inquiringly at the interpreter. He, in turn, bent forward and directed his gaze upon the little girl's feet.

* Foot hurts.

"By George! Chase, the little one's in torture. Look at her feet."

In an instant Chase was on his knees before the child. Long, skinny fingers clutched at his sleeve, and the priest's broken jargon sounded in his ear.

"No sabe? Foot allee light. Makee him alle same fine lady — little-foot looman."

The apostle of Confucius was startled out of his customary reserve by this menace to one of the most revered practices of his country. Chase shook off his hand with a look of savagery, and with tender and dexterous fingers drew off the tiny pointed shoes and flung them to the floor. Through the spicy atmosphere of Eastern perfumes that seemed to exhale from the small maiden a fetid odor was disseminated. Snatching a pen-knife from his pocket, the young man severed a broad band of ribbon, tightly bound about the toes, and, removing bandage after bandage,

at last disclosed two little feet in the first stages of artificial deformity, inflamed and swollen, and surrounded by a fringe of decaying flesh.

The pitying men and women who bent over the young sufferer were surprised by a sudden movement without their circle. Silently and swiftly as a stream that with one bound overleaps the barriers erected across its native course, Olive Ainsworth crossed the room, and the little group divided to admit her. Her fine eyes were ablaze with indignant horror, her breath came and went in labored respirations, but her face was glorified with a light that no one had ever seen there before. Humbly kneeling before the child, she covered with kisses and bathed with her tears the poor, maimed feet of one as pure and sinless as Him before whom knelt Magdalen of old.

Mrs. Baxter wiped a little moisture from her own eyes as she looked around

in gentle triumph. She cherished a belief that the human soul attains its noblest development only through actual contact with sin and misery, and she was unable to disguise a feeling of mild exultation at this striking exposition of her theory. Olive Ainsworth's heart had been found. Then the good woman grew uneasy.

After her first passionate gush of tears and broken murmurs of endearment, the girl gave way to hard, dry sobs, hiding her face in the child's garments, her arm embracing the small, bare limbs. The child submitted to the proceeding with the same strange apathy that had previously characterized her demeanor, won by heaven knows what dreary ordeal of coldness and long neglect.

Edwin Vanderlep, coldly watching the girl, felt that it was time to interfere, and crossed the room to her side.

"Olive, you must not let your sympa-

thies run away with you in this fashion. Quiet yourself. Your father would be greatly displeased."

His remonstrance fell unheeded. The girl raised her face, eloquent with love and longing, stretching out her arms to the child, while a single word left her lips:

"Darling!"

There was something in the impassioned cry that sent a thrill through every heart. In the midst of their every day, prosaic lives, before their dull, practical vision, a romance and a tragedy were unfolding, to which this word held the key. The sound of the voice aroused the child from its oriental stoicism, restoring some lost principle of spiritual vitality, animating its being like an electric spark.

The beautiful flower of human love budded in the little one's heart and blossomed in its face. The small mouth quivered, the sad eyes became radiant

with joy, and glittered with unaccustomed tears. Extending its arms, with a glad cry, it sobbed aloud as it was gathered to the girl's breast.

"My dear!" Mrs. Baxter's eyes were overflowing at this proof of the tender depths of her young friend's nature, but commonplace prudence asserted itself. "It is very sweet of you, very beautiful; but really there is no occasion—you must not be so prodigal of your sympathy. The child will be provided for. Think," she added, in a tragical whisper, "think of the quarter from which she was taken—the diseases that breed in every corner of Chinatown."

Olive Ainsworth rose to her feet, cradling the child upon her left arm, while with her right hand she covered the dingy little fingers that sought her white neck in untaught caress. For a brief space of time she scanned the questioning faces about her, fore-

casting their altered expression when she should utter the words that were trembling on her lips. Her determination never once faltered. The battle had been fought and won. Her face was pale and wet, but her eyes were illumined with the holiest sentiment ever consecrated to womanhood.

"It is my right. She is my child," she said.

It was very still in the room as she turned to secure a discarded wrap lying on a sofa at one side, and to fold it tenderly about the child. One man grasped by intuition the whole tragical story—the wretched error that had well nigh wrecked the life of the motherless girl; the flight from a shame too terrible to face; the crushing burden of remorse and wrong that had embittered her whole existence and turned life into a hollow mockery. The woman of his love had fallen from the heights of maidenly innocence and purity, on

which his fond fancy had enthroned her, only to rise to the loftier plane of self-immolating womanhood.

She paused a moment, perhaps because with the heavy spiritual burden she bore, her physical strength failed her; or it may have been because, in the extremity of the moment, her soul cried out for human sympathy and aid, for she looked long and piteously at the woman who had, the instant before, been her devoted friend. But Mrs. Baxter had daughters of her own at home, and held tight rein over her feelings, lest she should be betrayed into an indiscretion that might compromise their future. The girl noted every detail of the lady's attitude, from the small gloved hands, tightly clasped in her lap, to the shrinking of the down-dropped eyelids as she felt the penetrating gaze bent upon her. Yet there was no wonder or indignation, nothing but sad expectation verified, in her own

face as she turned away, clasping the child more closely to her, stepping slowly and heavily, like one who begins a toilsome journey

David Chase, his head bowed and anguish in his heart, seemed to see a meek and saintly figure, crowned with thorns, toiling up steep and rocky heights, amid the jeers of the multitude, weary and foot-sore, and burdened with a heavy cross. Was it harder, he asked himself, that stony way up Calvary, sustained by the power of a loftier purpose, and with the shining goal in sight, than this path wherein the woman of his love had set her tender feet; a way that led on into darkness, encompassed by unending pain and shame?

Unmindful of the others's presence, David Chase crossed the space that lay between them, and looked into her eyes, where undying penitence and pain couched passive for a time be-

neath the holy spell of victorious mother love. Solemnly and tenderly he took in his own the white hand that pressed the baby's palm.

Before the worthy band of philanthropists, who zealously labored to alleviate material ills, while blind to the complex workings of the human heart; in the face of the foul agents of evil, who beheld in the soul of every fellow-creature the reflection of their own depraved natures; in full view of the righteous women, whose sentiment of outraged virtue strove with the deeper sympathy of motherhood and compassionate thought of the evils which beset unprotected girlhood; before the grim priest, who stared upon the scene in stolid indifference, Chase carried the hand reverently to his lips.

ADAM AND EVE.

THE SERPENT WHO LOST HIS CASE.

HIS name was Adam Mercer, and her name was Eve, and partly because of their names, and partly because of their youth and innocence, and partly because of the beauty and restfulness of their little home, their friends made merry over it by dubbing it the Garden of Eden.

It must be conceded that Adam and Eve had decidedly the best of it, and could afford to have a little harmless fun poked at them by jesters of their acquaintance. Where, on all the San Francisco peninsula could be found a prettier suburban home than their acre or two of garden and orchard, surrounded by a blazing hedge of scarlet geraniums, and situated on a little knoll at the base of the foothills, fringed by

the woods and overlooking the bay? And where could be found a more energetic young business man than Adam, or a happier husband? or a sweeter little housewife than Eve, heart and soul absorbed in Adam? or a better cook, neater maid, or more devoted servant than Biddy, who ministered to the material demands of the household?

The Garden of Eden had been established for a year, and not a ripple had disturbed the peaceful current of life there, until the advent of Neal Meriwether.

Meriwether had been a classmate of Adam's at college, and had been left a considerable heritage by a deceased uncle, which somewhat unsettled the young man, and made it difficult for him to come to a decision regarding a vocation. He was drawn hither and thither by the force of various inclinations, and it was when he entertained an intention of becoming a farmer that

he asked the privilege of sojourning for a time in the Garden of Eden.

A wonderfully ingratiating fellow was this Meriwether. He conceived a zeal for floriculture, and the flowers throve and blossomed under his hands as they never had before, while choice plants of his own contribution filled all the available space in the garden. He became enamored of horticulture, and the orchard trees bristled with new scions on every bough, engrafted with a reckless disregard of species, so that apple trees were made to bear plums, and peach trees waved branches of pomegranate, and one poor cherry tree was made to nurture a variety of small fruits, so that before the season was over a tangle of raspberry and blackberry vines enwreathed its leafless branches.

Next he turned his attention to poultry, and tried to raise chickens in midwinter; failing in this, he pilfered half the contents of the birds' nests in the

surrounding region, and filled the hens' nests with miscellaneous settings of linnets' eggs, wrens' eggs, goldfinches' eggs, meadow larks' and yellow-hammers' eggs and quails' eggs, which were promptly devoured by the setting hens. Disgusted, but not by any means disheartened, he hired an incubator, and did not abandon his enterprise until he had cooked several successive batches of chickens in different states of development.

Next he turned his attention in quick succession to landscape gardening, the construction of a rustic arbor, building a circular stairway about the big sycamore tree, the planting of a labyrinth, and the construction of a fishpond and a fountain; and, although he nearly drowned himself in his fishpond, and the labyrinth grew only in spots, and thereby defeated its own purpose, and the stairway up the sycamore was too rickety to be trusted, and the landscape

was not improved by his gardening, he went about it all with such hearty good will that no one could fail to be interested in his efforts and tolerant of his failures.

Before little Eve was fully aware of it the hours no longer dragged when Adam was away. Instead of meeting him far down the road and enlivening his tiresome tramp homeward, he usually had to seek her in garden or orchard or henyard, where he invariably found her so engaged in helping Meriwether or watching the progress of his various enterprises, that she had lost all count of time. Her solicitude for her husband's business ventures changed to an idle, wandering interest. She did not even observe how the shadow of care deepened on Adam's face, driving away the old, sunny smile, engraving forbidding lines upon it.

Now it is not to be supposed that a serpent can invade one's domicile, and

trail its sinuous folds about his happiness or lure his wife on to destruction, without being perceived by a man of moderate intelligence. The day came when Adam's eyes were opened. He had come home graver than usual, his brain vexed by a stubborn financial problem, needing his wife's utmost sympathy and forbearance. He found his house deserted, the kitchen filled with smoke, and a beefsteak broiled to a coal upon the open fire. On the edge of a little hillock commanding a view of the poultry-yard he found the delinquent Biddy, arms akimbo, and a look of intense interest on her face. At the sight of her master a guilty sense of her neglect came over her, and the instinct of self-defense moved her to shield herself by diverting the blame elsewhere.

"The holy saints have mercy on us an' the dinner, Misther Mercer!" she cried. "But how in the name of all

common sinse a dacent woman's goin' to rimimber herself the while she's clare disthracted by the carryin's on o' thim two young craythurs, lavin' the fact wan o' thim's your wife, Misther Mercer."

But Adam was already taking great strides down toward the chicken yard, when a wild cry arrested him.

"Not a step, not a step further, Adam! O, Adam! stand right still. What if you should step on it!"

"Step on what!" cried Adam in consternation.

"The quail."

"The little quail we hatched in the incubator."

"We put it out to scratch in the weeds. It wouldn't eat anything we gave it."

"And I only left it a few minutes. If we leave it out all night it will surely die of the damp and cold. Hush! I'm sure I heard it cheep!"

"Hang the quail! You'd be in better business attending to Biddy and the dinner!" growled Adam, suddenly recognizing the sinister presence which had invaded his peaceful home, weaning his wife's interests from her domestic duties, diverting her affections from himself. "As for you, Meriwether,"—he began, and then wrath and disappointment choked him.

"O, I'll do very well. But I don't think you are quite yourself to-night, Mercer," returned Meriwether, with more spirit and dignity than Adam had given him credit for possessing.

Fortified by the serenity that arises from good tempers and clear consciences, Eve and Meriwether went in to dinner. Adam complained of a headache and went hungry to bed, to dream about the serpent that had taken up its abode in his little paradise.

Could Adam have seen clearly, it was not so much a question of a serpent as

of serpents; for at the very moment that he discovered the character of the guest he had so heedlessly entertained, the serpent of jealousy writhed into his own heart, and the serpent of discontent found a lodgment in the heart of gentle Eve, and quite another sort of a serpent crept into Meriwether's heart, and each of these mischievous reptiles but waited the opportunity to do some deadly harm to its possessor, while the serpent of discord presided over all.

The opportunity was not long in coming. Opportunities of this kind are always lurking about, waiting to spring upon their victims at the most favorable moment. Adam's temper had not improved the next morning, and he arose from the breakfast-table with a careless nod to his wife and his guest. Eve watched him as he went out of the room, with a puzzled and inquiring gaze. Then she hastily excused her-

self to Meriwether and sped through a side door down the walk, where Adam was making great strides for the gate.

"Why, Adam!" she cried reproachfully, lifting her pouting lips for the customary kiss, "how could you go off in this way?"

He stooped and kissed her without any fervor, drawing his watch from his pocket at the same moment. "Only ten minutes to catch my train," he said, hurriedly, and was gone.

Eve walked slowly back toward the house, her head drooping and her arms hanging by her side. Meriwether perceived that something had gone wrong, and, with his customary quick tact, saved her and himself all embarrassment by meeting the issue squarely and fairly.

"Adam's quite out of sorts, isn't he?" he said, inquiringly. Then, without waiting for her reply, he went on—

"I don't wonder at it in the least,

sitting down to those long columns of figures day after day. His head is all the while overtaxed. I am afraid his brain tissues are wearing out."

Eve looked alarmed.

"He must stop—see a physician"—she began.

"No necessity in the world," said Meriwether, confidently. "Those tissues only need repairing, and we can just as well attend to them ourselves. Oh, you needn't think I am going for him with a scalpel," perceiving Eve's look of horror. "It is a matter of chemistry, not surgery. It takes phosphates to repair the brain tissues, and he's been eating bread and cakes and pie and beef and fowl, till his brain is fairly worn threadbare. Now, you know, it is generally agreed among scientific men that there is no article of food so rich in phosphates as fish. And the other morning, when I climbed the hills for an early morning walk—you re-

member I lost my way, and got back in the middle of the forenoon, half famished? Well, that morning I stumbled across the prettiest little trout stream in the hills, and there's a dark pool there, so alive with the little speckled creatures that they streak through it every instant, like flashes of sunshine. I'm not much of a fisherman, but if you know where Adam keeps his tackle—"

"I'll get out the lines and poles right away," said Eve. "And I'll go with you myself. I can't put the worms on the hooks, but the fish always bite when I hold the pole."

"And no wonder," said Meriwether, gallantly, viewing the trim little figure and the sweet oval face, a faint flush in the cheeks, and the eyes shining with a happy purpose. "But as for the worms, isn't it the fashion to angle for trout with flies? And there's that collection of insects Adam started to make

last summer and never completed. There are two or three dragon-flies there that could be spared for a day or two. I'll catch some more for him to-morrow."

It did not take this pair of friendly conspirators long to carry out their project. Meriwether drew on a pair of long rubber boots and donned a sportsman's jacket, and abstracted the flies from Adam's case of insects, carefully shutting them into a pasteboard box, which he stowed away in one of his capacious pockets. Eve ran off and soon reappeared in the short woolen dress she always wore on her mountain walks, armed with the fishing tackle and basket, and with a nice luncheon, packed by Biddy, whom they took along as an humble and not-over-willing duenna.

The pool was all that Meriwether had pictured, deep and shadowy, near the head of a mountain cañon, sheltered

by evergreen oaks and overhung by great boulders, with a rich growth of ferns about their bases. Singularly enough, the fish were very shy of the dragon-flies, and it was not until Meriwether had gone down to a marshy flat and dug some earth-worms, that a fine great fellow was impaled on Eve's hook. Eve shut her eyes, as her fellow angler removed the struggling victim, and mercifully hit it in the head, to end its struggles. Then she gave one quick peep. It looked curiously dull and commonplace, lying on the grass, merely a sheen of dark gray and a sheen of white, with a frog-like head and bloody gills.

"I cannot see how it is that anglers are always raving about the beauty of trout. This is a very commonplace creature," she said.

"Oh, it is only while they are in the water that they show their spangles," said Meriwether.

The first fish that they drew out of the pool were from nine to twelve inches in length, and rose readily to the bait; but after a while, Eve, who had been intently gazing down into a hollow at the base of the boulder on which she was perched, spoke, in a low, hushed voice, pointing downward.

"There is an old fellow hiding in there—a regular old patriarch—simply enormous! But I can't coax him to come out. He has had experience. He knows the meaning of hook and line—you can tell by the glint of his eye."

"I know a trick that will take him, said Meriwether, after he had bent his own gaze on the black hole, and been rewarded by the sight of a big, dark head, and the whisk of a long, sinuous body.

Among his captures was a tiny fish, little more than a minnow, which he had preserved only for swelling the

number of his "catch." This he now affixed securely to his hook, and waving Eve back, while he himself retreated out of sight, he flung the line over the top of the boulder and waited for results.

They were long in coming. Ten, fifteen minutes passed. There came a cautious nibble at the bait, and Meriwether straightened himself, preparing to give the line a quick, strong pull, but the old veteran was wary, and retreated, to turn over the toothsome morsel he had stolen, and to satisfy himself that it was wholesome and digestible. The result of his experiment, was evidently satisfactory, for there suddenly came a powerful pull. He braced himself and jerked up his rod, and a fish two feet and a half long spun through the air and dangled from the boughs of the sycamore tree. Meriwether scrambled up the leaning trunk as nimbly as a squirrel, cut the line,

and came back with the monster in his hand.

"A ten-pounder, as I live!" he cried out gaily. "Now I propose to rest upon our laurels and go home."

Biddy was snoring peacefully in the shadow of the wagon, where they had left her. She awoke to the consciousness that she had seated herself in the vicinity of an ant-hill, and shook her skirts in a panic of righteous indignation, which was not assuaged by Eve's benevolent invitation to share their triumph.

Meriwether generously held out for her admiration the big fish, which he had pillowed in his arms like a baby. Bridget gave a snort, which might have been construed to mean jealousy, derision or compelled admiration.

"An' that 'll be yer big trout," she said shortly. Then she chuckled in a way that was downright disagreeable, and that caused Eve to resolve, as she

had resolved many times before, that she would put up with Biddy's presumption no longer, but would pack her off to the city as soon as her month was up.

"Misther Mercer is the foine fisherman, but niver a throut the loikes uv that did he catch," said Biddy.

Adam came home that night, feeling a little ashamed of his coldness in the morning, and the appetizing smell that greeted him, as he approached the house, helped to put him in the best of humors.

Eve met him without a trace of resentment. Indeed, her first words were an accusation of herself, if they were a little incoherent.

"I've been neglecting you, dear boy!" she said, "but you don't know how hard it is to get any variety of supplies at this distance from the city. We've been out all day catching them—Mr. Meriweather and I—and your brain tissues shall be mended, if trout will do it."

"Trout!" said Adam, catching at the one intelligible word in her speech. "And you've been out fishing? Meriweather's a trump! I'm awfully fond of trout. Hope you've a good mess for I'm hungry as a bear."

"We have a splendid big one for dinner," returned Eve, beaming.

"One!" cried Adam, with a hungry man's consternation at being offered a crumb when he feels equal to the whole loaf.

"But he's a monster! Come and see." Eve drew him towards the dining-room, where Meriwether was already at the table, and Bridget was just entering, bringing something on a huge platter. She set this down before her master's place, and stood off to contemplate the scene, her arms akimbo, and her stout figure shaking.

Adam lifted carving-fork and prodded the carcass, bending over to scan it, as he parted the white meat.

"Mercer," said Meriwether, leaning forward to gloat over his prize, "I claim the palm for the biggest trout caught in California."

Adam laid down his fork and scowled at his friend with the scorn of the man who knows.

"Meriwether," he said blandly, "if you will go down to the Chinese camp, four miles below here, you can buy, every day in the week, for three cents a pound, pike that will run three and four pounds more than this specimen. They kill them with gunpowder. They're not very much in demand among white people. Bridget," turning to the grim old servant, who was waiting, grimly expectant, "haven't you a plate of cold meat, or a can of sardines, somewhere?"

"Adam, you are the most ungrateful man I ever saw," said Eve, trying to jest, with a sob in her voice. "Here have we — Mr. Meriwether and I — been devoting the whole day to chas-

ing after phosphates to repair your brain tissues. You ought to take it on faith. You should eat it, if we told you it was a humming-bird, and you knew it was a whale!"

So days and weeks glided by, and the more surly and morose Adam grew, the more considerate and attentive Meriwether became, and the more naturally Eve inclined toward the companionship of the man who brought cheer and sunshine into her life, rather than clouds and shadows. And one day she too awoke to the knowledge that a serpent had invaded her home, and that she was in the toils of the tempter,

Both of the men had gone to the city that morning, Adam at his usual hour, Meriwether an hour later. Eve had parted with her husband in the formal way to which they had both grown accustomed, but Meriwether had snatched her hand and pressed a kiss upon it, looking at her with jubilant eyes, and crying out gaily:

"I shall have something to tell you, —something to tell you, when I come back!"

After he had gone the loneliness of the place oppressed Eve, and his words haunted her, until suddenly she awoke to the fact that she was not dull or lonely or desolate because her husband was away, but because for the first time in a month Meriwether had left her.

O, the shame, the misery, the humiliation of it! That this should have come to her! That she should have permitted another man's image to find so much as a lodgment in her heart! She, Adam Mercer's true and loyal wife!

Thank God that she had discovered it before it was too late. Thank God that the kind Providence that sometimes watches over the innocent and weak, had opened her eyes in time. Thank God that she could spurn this unworthy and degrading thought with her first consciousness of it.

All day long she roamed from place to place, in an agony of self-accusation and self-contempt. She went into the orchard and plucked Meriwether's grafts from the apricot tree under which Adam and she had stood and watched the glorious sunset on their wedding day. She went down to the poultry-yard and set free a score or more of half-fledged chickens sheltered in an artificial "mother" of Meriwether's construction. She rearranged the books and papers in the little sitting-room, kindling the fire with some horticultural and poultry magazines. She lifted Meriwether's slippers with the tongs, from where he had lazily left them that morning, beside the fireplace, and dropped them in the edge of the room he occupied, putting Adam's slippers in their place. As the day drew to a close she went out to listen for the whistle of Adam's train, and coming upon the remnant

of Meriwether's abortive attempt at a labyrinth, shuddered as she fancied that she saw, in the broken lines, a resemblance to a serpent's sinuous trail. She fell upon it in a small fury, and uprooted the stunted evergreens with her hands, flinging them to right and to left.

While little Eve, in her fair garden, had been struggling with her tempter, Adam had been wrestling with one of his own, and had come off the conqueror. It was no mean battle, for Adam's serpent was a stout and lusty one, a real Python of a fellow. It had met him on the way to the boat that morning, suggesting a simple and an easy way of escape from his financial difficulties. He was a crafty old serpent, who knew how to color his pleadings with a saturnine philosophy that appealed to a vein of grim humor in Adam's nature. His suggestion was the old one of fighting fire with fire,

matching cunning with cunning, evil with evil.

In Adam's desk lay a check for a hundred and some odd dollars, drawn and signed by Meriwether, and carelessly flung by, when he had decided to change the amount by a few dollars. Adam had picked it up at the time, scolding Meriwether for his negligence. There it lay, instinct with evil potentialities. The addition of two figures, two words filled in a blank space, would turn Meriwether's fortune into Adam's keeping. There would be no question at the bank, for he was known as Meriwether's friend, and was in the habit of cashing checks for him. Then he would only need to ship on some outward-bound vessel, leaving behind him all his troubles and perplexities; unrelenting creditors, false friend, false wife.

No! By all the powers of heaven and earth, he would not leave her!

Eve could never be false. Thoughtless she might be, and reckless, but he could swear that her mind was never sullied by an impure thought. Even if the hour of temptation should come for her, who should be there to help her meet it but he, her natural protector? He would be true to her—true to his own manhood. The battle was over, and he laughed to see how poor and wraithlike a thing was the serpent after all, as its folds fell away from him, weak and flaccid, and he went out of his office a free man; freed from temptation, freed from groveling suspicion, armed with the strength of one who has conquered his worst foe—the evil in his own heart.

When he walked briskly up the flower-bordered lane leading to his little Garden of Eden, and beheld Eve darting hither and thither through Meriwether's labyrinth, uprooting the stunted cypresses, he looked on for a

moment in amazement. Then he spoke:

"What will Meriwether say?"

"Meriwether! What do I care!"

She flung herself upon her husband with a fervor that made up for weeks of coldness and estrangement.

"O, Adam, send him away. Make some excuse—any pretext," "you like, she cried, but let us have our own dear home to ourselves again!"

Just then Meriwether appeared, pushing aside a bough of yellow acacia blossoms that hung down in his way, and that made Eve think of the flaming sword; but the young fellow brushed the shower of golden petals from his coat-sleeve with his usual easy unconcern.

"Save the pieces!" he cried out gaily, as he began to gather the uprooted evergreens. "I know it's a failure as a labyrinth, but it is an uncommonly pretty species of evergreen. I'll keep

them as mementoes of this jolly summer. And they'll be just so much of a start for me. I've bought the old Leighton place, adjoining yours. I hope you'll like my wife that is to be, Mrs. Mercer. Professor Numskull's daughter, Mercer. You knew her?"

The young pair stammered their congratulations, but Meriwether ran on, scarcely noting the interruption.

"I'm under a multitude of obligations to you, Mercer. I know I've been no end of bother to you, but the experience I've had here will save me a pretty sum, I don't doubt. In fact, I don't believe I'm just adapted to farming. Shall let a man run things here for me. I've got to look up something else to do. And, Mercer, if you could just let me into your office. I haven't much of a business head, but if a few thousands would be any compensation for having me around!"——

A few thousands! To a man who

was suffering the most pitable embarassment for the lack of a few hundreds.

Adam Mercer put his hand to his head with a gesture of confusion. The old Biblical story was getting queerly mixed up. There were so many serpents, and the woman refused the apple, if, indeed, the serpent ever offered it! And who ever heard of the serpent putting one to the blush? Yet Adam's cheeks were flaming.

"I beg your pardon, Meriwether," he said, "but I've had such a time lately—"

"With snakes"—he was going to say, when it occurred to him that Meriwether would scarcely understand.

"O, that's all right," interrupted Meriwether. "Take your time to think it over. Only I know you'll never have the heart to refuse me. We've got along together so famously this summer."

Flora Haines Loughead.